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# The Equality of the Gaze: The Animal Stares Back in Chris Marker's Films

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## Abstract:

This article considers a selection of Chris Marker's films in the context of noted differences between Emmanuel Levinas's and Jacques Derrida's positions on the animal as Other, the potential for the animal face. Derrida (2008) himself argues that Levinas 'did not make the animal anything like a focus of interrogation within his work' (p. 105). Statements such as this about Levinas's ethics seem to make his position clear. In contrast, Derrida's thinking on the matter of the animal, and in particular human responsibility for them as Other, stands as a thorough and influential body of ethical thought, probing the limited and limiting boundary between human and animal. His autobiographical texts, according to Lynn Turner (2015, p. 135), welcome animal others. Marker's images, I will argue, address an equity between species through what he refers to as the *égalité du regard*, an equality in the gaze (of the camera). These images speak to a space beyond themselves and it is within this territory, I will argue, that the animal does have a face, that can occur via that of the human.

**Keywords:** Marker; Levinas; Derrida; Animal; Gaze; Ethics

In his seminal text on the question of the animal Other in Levinas's thought, the philosopher John Llewelyn (1991) observes:

When asked about our responsibilities toward nonhuman sentient creatures, he is inclined to reply that our thinking about them may have

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to be only analogical or that the answer turns on whether in the eyes of the animal we can discern a recognition, however obscure, of his own mortality – on whether, in Levinas's sense of the word, the animal has a face. (pp. 56–57)

The idea of the animal face as an analogy will be returned to later in this article, but first I wish to concentrate on the fundamental ambiguity demonstrated by Levinas's texts when confronted with key questions around responsibility for the animal, Otherness and the animal face. Diane Perpich (2008) argues that 'for Levinas what matters is not a *what* but a *who*' (p. 154). Perpich's decisive indication of Levinas's consideration of the human - the who - as what matters aligns with Derrida's perception of his work above. But accepting Perpich's summation, which refers to a distinct division between animal and human, obscures a level of ambiguity on both sides of that divide in Levinas's work. Such uncertainty is present in the essential component of his ethical philosophy of the 'face', a term queried throughout his career. The face-to-face obligates the subject to the Other and 'places the center of gravitation of a being outside of that being' (Levinas, 2012b, p. 183). Slavoj Žižek's summation of the effect of the face in Levinas's ethics is perhaps the most precise: 'When face to face with the other, I am infinitely responsible to him. This is the original ethical constellation' (2005, p. 148). The face-to-face encounter encapsulates, in essence, the responsibility of the subject for the Other. It is in this meeting between faces that the ethical obligation, the asymmetrical relation between subject and Other, occurs. In his later thought Levinas contends that the face is not the façade presented to the world, not the features, the eyes and nose, but alterity itself (Wright, Hughes & Ainley, 1988, p. 170). So, does the animal have a face? Is it an Other who obligates the subject to be responsible? Can the animal be a subject? These are questions posed and to some degrees answered by Derrida elsewhere in intimate exploration of Levinas's writings with vacillating conclusion (Derrida, 1991, p. 96–119). Cary Wolfe (2003) detects a negative in response to the questions posed above on the animal's ethical call to the human in Levinasian ethics, concluding that for Levinas, the animal 'has no face; it cannot be an other' (pp. 61 and 65). In contrast, Matthew Calarco (2008) argues against an anthropocentrism in Levinas's philosophy, despite the philosopher's own stance, suggesting that non-human animals, as others, *can* elicit a sense of responsibility in human beings (p. 55). It is in the gaps between such polarized readings as these and those between the thoughts of Levinas and Derrida in regard to questions of the animal Other that the terrain of this article is plotted.

### **The Animal as Other**

Derrida considers that Levinas attempts to locate the 'animal outside of the ethical circuit' (2008, p. 106). Whereas Derrida's own ethical thought would place the animal back within this circuit, I would question the drawing of a crude boundary that, in Levinas, does not only not consider the animal as a 'them' in contrast to 'us', but does not consider them at all (2008, p. 106). Derrida endeavors to position the animal in a sequence with the human Other, rather than on the other side of a partition, asking whether it isn't 'more other still, more radically other [...] than the other in who I recognize my brother, than the other in whom I identify my fellow or my neighbour?' (2008, p. 107). The animal should be considered as more Other than the neighbor, which, in Levinas's *Otherwise Than Being*, is roughly synonymous with the Other as it is theorized in *Totality and Infinity*. It would be more vulnerable than the human Other and one, therefore, would be obliged to them, be more responsible for them:

If I have a duty – something owed before any debt, before any right – toward the other, wouldn't it then also be toward the animal, which is still more other than the other human, my brother or my neighbour? (Derrida, 2008, p. 107)

Derrida concludes that Levinas does not accept this premise and refuses to take account of the animal as Other. Derrida's position is not intended to corrode the boundaries between human and non-human, to ignore the differences between species; instead he argues that 'you have to *multiply* the differences', not blur them (1987, p. 183). His ethics accounts for a lineage, perhaps a Darwinian-evolutionary approach to genera, in which the human is just one species alongside the cat, the horse, the snake. Derrida's is 'perhaps the most sustained effort to link difference-based philosophy to animal issues', according to Calarco (2015, p. 34). Derrida's argument for a focus on and proliferation of difference confounds Levinas's disregard for the animal as Other, the impossibility of the animal face.

### **The Camera Gaze: The Animal in Marker's Cinematic Images**

Marker has what cinema critic Bamchade Pourvali calls a 'profound attachment to animals' (2003, p. 66). Many of his films are dominated by images of them and comment on the violence humans enact upon them (*Three Cheers for the Whale* [1972] and *Bullfight in Okinawa* [1994]), or the network we intrinsically share with them (*Letter to Siberia* [*Lettre de Sibirie*, 1958] and *Theories des Ensembles* [1990]). Not only do Marker's

films offer a menagerie of animal images, but they present these images as both what they are – shots of animals – and as complex metaphors. Jonathan Burt has written of the ‘semantic overload’ of the animal image in film, how it is a site where metaphorical associations ‘collapse into each other’, where it becomes ‘a form of rupture in the field of representation’ (2002, p. 11). The animal image is a location for a confluence of metaphors, its signification cracked and multiplied. This rupture can lead to a weakening of the animal image in film in which it stands only for something else. Llewellyn’s notion of the necessarily ‘analogical’ relationship the human has with the animal singular in Levinas’s thought, is pertinent here. Our thinking about the animal is analogous, at one remove from our thinking about the human.

For Marker, however, the image of the animal is always the animal it represents, but it can also refer to other animals (humans) and complex concepts. Levinas and Marker seem to be approaching the same problem from opposite sides. Laura McMahon writes in her introduction to the recent *Screen* ‘Animals Dossier’, that the ‘presence of the animal onscreen often confounds clear distinctions between the diegetic and the extradiegetic’ (2015, p. 82). The animal image communicates with other images and ideas not only within the confines of the frame but beyond it, and this is evident as a discernible communication between the animal and human in Marker’s work. At times anthropomorphism, at others the opposite, Marker regularly presents himself as an animal, famously through his avatar Guillaume-en-Égypte, the ‘guide’ through his CD-Rom *Immemory* (1997), his arbiter in the online game *Second Life*, his representative in Agnès Varda’s *Beaches of Agnès* (*Les Plages d’Agnès*, 2008) and a real cat. Marker has also identified himself with the elephant child of Rudyard Kipling’s *Just-So Stories* (1902), because of his ‘insatiable curiosity’ (Douhaire & Rivoire, 2003, p. 39).

Marker’s images do not however commit the same violence that, for Anat Pick, cinema commits on the animal as one of the ‘modern biopolitical apparatuses that not only control and process nonhuman bodies but constitute animals as bodies, and lives, to-be-dominated’ (2015, p. 98). Instead, Marker’s articulations demonstrate a particular equity between the human and animal in his films. Similarly, Nora Alter notes that: ‘Marker’s camera treats all subjects in front of its lens without differentiating between humans, statues, animals, landscapes, architecture or signs’ (2006, p. 59). Marker’s camera is indiscriminate, filming humans and animals (and inanimate objects) as equals. Such de-humanising, being less human and more like (certain) animals, is not regressive for Marker, instead he considers an association with animals as positive.

There is in Marker's images what he himself refers to in the commentary of *Sans soleil* (1983) as the *égalité du regard*, reiterated in his eponymous article on the film (1993, p. 85). In Marker's films the camera-lens is a position through which a unity occurs, through which a reciprocal or reciprocated gaze passes. This equality between gazes is, as Marker writes elsewhere, a rapport between subjects (2008, p. 144). Catherine Gillet argues that it is in 'the equality of the look' that the 'poignance of things is measured' (2006, p. 79) and this occurs through and because of the pauses, the frozen frames in Marker's *Sans Soleil*. Gillet's argument suggests the image as captured, postponed as a living being and adorned and adored as a prize. The poignancy of a moment is only visible if that moment is seized and if the gaze of the camera is met. The moments of the gaze meet as a reciprocated look and are not concerned with the tenderness felt by the cameraman for his subjects, but reflect the equality between them. Such an analysis would position Marker's consideration of the animal against Derrida's focus on and multiplication of differences between species. Indeed, Marker breaks down the boundaries between animal and human in his films.

For Marker, animals represent what the voiceover in *Sans Soleil* refers to as a 'partition wall that separates life from death'. This movement between life and death contains what Catherine Lupton calls his 'preoccupation with cultures that find a way to accommodate death' (2008, pp. 158–159). Death is integral to Marker's consideration of the cultures he encounters, and the ways in which societies interpret it is a key to unlocking differences and, more importantly, understanding similarities between them. To use Levinas's descriptions, death is an 'irreducible oncoming movement', the 'concrete and primary phenomenon' for every being (2012b, p. 233 and p. 235). In this sense, at least, there is equality between human and animal in Levinas's thought. Death is the event that all living beings encounter and which therefore connects them all, although for Edgar Morin, 'the human species is the only one for whom death is present in life' (1970, p. 17). The human is the only species that thinks about death, for whom death is a constant presence in their lives, differentiating it from other animals. Extending Lupton's analysis, the differences between 'species' as well as cultures can be considered through Marker's communications with death in his films. Burlin Barr writes that in *Sans Soleil* death 'becomes a site or a mise-en-scene for staging cultural contact' (2004, p. 181). Death is the scene of Marker's contact with the Other. And, for Marker, the animal, if only analogically, is an Other for whom one is responsible. In Marker's films, images of animals remark on a transition between human and animal and also life and death. Occurring mid-way through *Sans Soleil*,

Japanese schoolchildren mourn the death of a Panda at a ceremony in Tokyo zoo, and the narrator suggests that:

the partition wall that separates life from death does not seem so thick to them as it does to a Westerner. What I read most often in the eyes of people who are about to die, is surprise. What I read right now in the eyes of these Japanese children is curiosity. As if they were trying, in order to understand the death of an animal, to stare through the partition.

As these words are spoken, the images move from those of Japanese children placing flowers on a tomb to a giraffe running through an African savannah then back to the children. There is a motion from children (humans) to animals, here. In the sequence, there is then a brief insert of a close-up image of a man in a balaclava firing a pistol, which cuts back to the giraffe ambling through the dusty plains. Abruptly the giraffe is shot and falls down, rises and runs, is shot again, stumbles. Links are made between death and life, Asia and Africa and, of course, the human and the animal. This brief sequence reveals the animal as simultaneously a signifier of death and the victim of man's desire to capture and possess the Other.

The animal image as metaphor for each of these ideas reverberates throughout Marker's cinematic works, for instance in his and Alain Resnais's *Statues Also Die* (*Statues Meurent aussi*, 1953). In a sequence of two shots edited together rapidly, a gorilla, its stomach slashed, pitches backwards from a sitting position, and the film then cuts to a shot of the same beast lying on the dusty ground, mouth agape, eyes closed, in a cliché of death. Filming the ape falling into supine stasis suggests the passage from life to death. Further, in Marker's commentary for Joris Ivens's *...à Valparaíso* (1965) he discusses a horse at Viña del Mar which had previously won a big race, yet after five years has to 'play the city's game'. The commentary elaborates that Buffalo Bill 'is waiting for his meat. A black cross is the sign of death, and his eyelids flutter – he knows'. The horse bears the mark of death, and is conscious of it. In both scenes, the animal, the gorilla, the horse, has death thrust prematurely, unnaturally, upon them by humans. There is, in contradiction to Morin's assertion that death stalks human life only, a hint of anthropomorphism in the horse's consciousness of the death that haunts his life. In an article exploring André Bazin's film writing and the 'exploration film', Seung-Hoon Jeong and Dudley Andrew (2008) propose that:

Lacking subjectivity, animals do not die as humans do; they simply expire and perish through their species. Cinema, however, has given us an idea of 'death itself' far starker than the humanized notion that occupies

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philosophy. Animal life is depicted by the camera as unconscious and uncomprehending, and thus close to death. (p. 3)

Whilst the animal does not experience death as humans do, this ignorance of death in animal being, as embodied by the cinema, is at once closer to a living death. I argue that the final scene of Marker's documentary, *The Base of the Air is Red* (*Le Fond de l'air est rouge*, 1977) intimates that animal life, and therefore death, is equivalent to that of human sacrifice. There, also, the violence that humans commit upon animals is reflected back onto humanity, posing ethical questions about the responsibility for the Other.

In *The Base of the Air is Red*, a number of wolves are culled in order to control the population and 'for sport'. The camera acts as or stands for a weapon. The wolves disperse, scattering in fear, and a helicopter flies into the frame, hovering above the ground. There is a cut to a shot filmed from a helicopter in which a lone wolf, bounding, tongue lolling with exertion, looks into the camera as bullets strike the dirt around it. The wolf is offered the *égalité du regard*, looking back and meeting the gaze of the camera. The film then cuts to another image shot from the ground, the camera pointing towards the helicopter, as if it were the target's point of view, as a man leans from an open door, a rifle at his shoulder. The use of shot-reverse shot is designed to engender sympathy in the viewer as they too look up at death hovering above.

The narrator speaks of the political left being decimated in the decade between 1968 and 1978 and the few of them left. Human and animal are analogous. This scene is an echo of the opening scene of the film in which an American military helicopter flies over villages allegedly hiding Viet Cong guerrillas. The camera films from the cockpit of the aircraft, as a pilot repeatedly describes their dropping of Napalm and the visible dispersion of the villagers as 'outstanding', while high-octane explosions decimate the jungle and fields below. Both humans and animals are eradicated in the indiscriminate bombing, but they are not seen and certainly not offered the *égalité du regard* that the wolf in the later scene is extended. In both sequences, death expunges vulnerable, defenceless targets on the ground, and the camera is in an omnipresent, privileged position, juxtaposed with the source of this death. The wolves and the suspected Viet Cong fighters are associated, animal and human. The connection between animal and human that Marker forms in order to query the responsibility for the animal is furthered in *Sans Soleil* in footage of convulsive cats in Minamata, Japan. These cats, poisoned by mercury dumped in the town's water supply by the Chisso Corporation chemical factory, dribble, stumble and thrash about in paroxysmal pain, and an edit



juxtaposes them with footage of human victims of the mercury pollution. The human casualties also drool and writhe in agony. The cats are not just fleeting metaphors for the people of the town as Marker reveals the equal effect of the toxic water, the inevitability of death, for both species.

Marker's images work to diminish the difference between species that Derrida believes is essential, and also obligate the human spectator to the animal Other and specifically their death in ways which Levinas considered irrelevant. For Llewelyn, Levinas's consideration of the mortality of the animal is intrinsically linked to whether it has a face. This question, put to Levinas by Llewelyn, received the response, that the 'human face is completely different and only afterwards do we discover the face of the animal' (1991, p. 64–65). Derrida analyses this answer as allowing for the potential of the animal face, and, therefore, the animal gaze (2008, p. 109). The human relationship with the animal as Other is, for Derrida one of the shared gaze, and Jennifer Fay writes that he 'posits "the animal" problem as a visual phenomenon' (2008, p. 55). Famously, Derrida talks of the gaze of his cat catching him naked in his bathroom, the face to face exchange between the animal and its master:

if the cat observes me frontally naked, face to face, and if I am naked faced with the cat's eyes looking at me as it were from head to toe, just to see, not hesitating to concentrate its vision – in order to see, with a view to seeing. (2008, p. 4)

In the instant of (the feeling of embarrassment at) being seen naked, the face-to-face encounter between cat and human is discernible. The cat looks back, meets the human gaze. It is pertinent that Derrida should choose the cat for his example (although one could argue that he would not expect to find many other species of animal in his bathroom). For Marker, who calls himself 'The Cat Who Walks by Himself', we do not own cats, they own us, they 'are gods, the most widespread and accessible form of god' (1952, p. 78). To him, cats are superior to humans, a deity for, or at least amongst, them. This notion maintains the difference between species and between the subject and the Other. The hierarchy between subject and Other, with the latter positioned above the former, is for Levinas vital to the responsibility for the Other, the Other's face. As he says in an interview later in his career:

It is the frailty of the one who needs you, who is counting on you. This is where the idea of dissymmetry – which is very important to me – comes from. It is not at all a question of a subject faced with an object. It is, on the contrary, that I am strong and you are weak. I am your servant and you are the master. (Wright et al, 1988, p. 171)

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It is essential that the Other be considered as vulnerable, in need of the attention of the subject. Tina Chanter writes that Levinas's philosophy 'begins with the other' (1994, p. 223). But this relationship is in itself vulnerable to flux. The subject is strong and subservient, the Other weak and masterful. The mastery derives from the weakness. To transcend phenomenal or inward existence, 'does not consist in receiving the recognition of the Other, but in offering him one's being' (Levinas, 2012b, p. 183). This hierarchy is one that remains exactly that, with one individual in the ascendancy which does not correspond with the reciprocity at the core of the *égalité du regard* of Marker's camera. The animal is certainly not worthy of being called an Other and Levinas does not even know if the animal has a face to gaze back with. Without a face, Levinas confirms, an animal cannot engage in the face-to-face encounter from which responsibility for the Other issues. Whereas, the cat for Marker is in the ascendancy, as divinity, but can also be vulnerable, both strong and weak, the master and the servant, and can also obligate the (human) subject in and through Marker's images. This then, exactly as Derrida requires, multiplies the differences between the species. The cat is Other to our subject and potentially subject to our Other.

This variability in the position of the cat is evident in Marker's photo-film, *Si j'avais quatre dromadaires* (1966). In this short film, a sequence of static photographs of animals passes in quick succession: a lioness, on her back, staring into camera, caged by the stasis of the image and the bars that surround her; a chained Alsatian dog and a cat, also staring into the lens, clamped uncomfortably in the arms of a young girl, twice held. The images all talk to the potential power humans have over these animals and, therefore, the responsibility we have for them that, for the cats at least, is projected through their gaze into the camera. This transitioning between forms, animal and human is also, importantly, caught in the gaze of the animal.

In *Sans Soleil*, one of the sequences in the markets of Bissau ends with a cat looking at camera. The images preceding the shot of the cat are of women customers of the market, whose gaze back at the camera Marker films as the narrator explains, 'I could stare at [the women] again with equality'. The feline look that ends the sequence in the market of Bissau also speaks to an awareness of the subject's self, one's singular existence defined, not by the Other, but as an individual. According to John Berger, the animal gaze that meets the human look draws attention to the human:

The same animal may well look at other species in the same way. He does not reserve a special look for man. But by no other species except for man

will the animal's look be recognised as familiar. Other animals are held by the look. Man becomes aware of himself returning the look. (2009, pp. 4–5)

Only humans recognise the look as a look, only they engage with the gaze. Berger (2009) continues that the companionship between human and animal is a 'companionship offered to the loneliness of man' (p. 6). The cat's gaze, as much as that of the women of the market, singles out the man with the camera, makes him aware of his solitude, his individuality, his difference. This is closer to Derrida (2008) and his embarrassment at the cat looking at his nakedness, 'the gaze of the cat that sees me naked, and sees me see it seeing me naked' (p. 58), than to Levinas's conception of the animal's gaze. In Marker's film the cat makes the human aware of his subject-hood.

But Levinas also writes of an animal that interacts with humans and which not only emphasises their humanity, but returns it to them. In his much-analysed essay 'The Name of a Dog', he refers to Bobby, the stray dog that waits for 'the band of apes' to return home 'barking in delight' and recognising their humanity (Levinas, 2012a, p. 48 and p. 49). The 'band of apes' includes Levinas himself along with other Jewish prisoners of war in a Nazi concentration camp. Levinas, if only momentarily, attributes a power to Bobby, the dog, that he typically reserves for the Other, in (human) face-to-face encounters. In this brief paper, he also finds a movement between the human and non-human, a contiguity that specifically resides in the equity of death, that of the animal and of the human (the European Jews at the hands of the Nazis). David L. Clark, writing on Levinas's essay, refers to the philosopher's way of 'narrowing the distance between [animal and human] without actually saying that they are the same thing' (2004, p. 46). Levinas hesitates before assigning equality between species, although, he writes that there is a 'transcendence in the animal' (2012a, p. 48). The animal, the dog, Bobby, ascends in the same manner as the Other does in the face-to-face encounter that forms the core of Levinas's ethical philosophy. In Marker's short film, *Cat Listening to Music* (1990) – made for *Zapping Zone (Proposals for an Imaginary Television)* (1990–94), a mixed media installation – the animal transcends its diminished position as pet and becomes at once a signifier for another species and iconic image. The real Guillaume-en-Égypte is filmed sleeping on the keys of a keyboard, still, until suddenly waking and looking first into camera and then just past it, at, one assumes, Marker himself filming. The shot is reminiscent of the only moving images of Marker's *La Jetée* (1962) in which the woman slowly wakes, her eyes open sleepily and she stares at the camera, meeting its gaze. The similarity of the mise-en-scène in these sequences speaks to a link between the animal and human and the

notion of the animal staring back, demanding responsibility is taken for it as an Other, as it meets the lens, or eye, of the camera.

### **The Camera Eye: Face-to-Face (or Eye to Eye)**

Marker frequently associates his camera with an eye, as when in *Sans soleil*, the narrator says the 'magical function of the eye is at the centre of all things', over footage of local elections in Tokyo. Marker pointedly associates the eye and the camera as the camera-eye. The concept of the camera as eye derives primarily from Soviet director Dziga Vertov's theory of the Kino-Glaz (cine-eye). Writing in 1919, Vertov asserts that the cine-eye is 'more perfect than the human eye for examining the chaos of visual phenomena' and that it 'perceives and fixes its impressions in a completely different way from that of the human eye' (2005, p. 91). The ways in which the camera-eye perceives differ from those of the human eye. Jean Epstein cultivates a similar idea in his contemporaneous writing about cinema. For him the camera eye, like the human eye, 'has its own perspective' (Epstein, 1988, p. 244). These notions of the camera-eye as separate from the eye of the cameraman, are key here. The camera-eye is 'completely different' from the human eye, it independently captures the form of an object, offering a surface, a partition, a space between the cameraman's gaze and that of the subject of the image. In the Josenkai Sex Museum in Hokkaido in *Sans Soleil*, the narrator explains that there is no censorship in the museum as any sex can be shown as long as it is 'severed from the body', over stills of (humanoid) phallic and vulvic statues. The images progress to show taxidermy animals, in copulating couples, as the voiceover suggests that in these 'glassy animals' could be read: 'the rift in Japanese society, the rift between men and women. In life it seems to show itself in two ways only. In violent slaughter or a discreet melancholy'. The animal, again, is a permeable partition between two supposed opposites – a signifier for the distance, the difference, between men and women.

The shots of these animals focus doubly on the sexual organ: each image has an iris like circle of light at its centre, illuminating the distinct, pink, erogenous zones, highlighted in the darkened fur and shadows. A luminous iris projects from the locus of the camera – an eye that locates the genitals – creating an exchange between them. This double focus is common to images created by Marker in both his film and photographic works, such as in the photograph of Alexandra Stewart taken circa 1964 during the shooting of Pierre Kast's *The Heat of a Thousand Suns* (*La Brûlure de mille soleils*, 1965). According to Carol Mavor, Stewart 'looks through a porthole of glass: transparently walled off. Like Snow White in her coffin, she is near and unreachable, in two zones at once' (2012, p. 59). The independent camera allows for the *égalité du regard*, the

lens is the permeable partition through which animal and human can commune without restrictive boundaries.

The iris-light, the projection of the eye of the camera, does not attempt to contain in its visuality the gaze or the sex of the animals of Josenkai. For Levinas, the image cannot capture the face of the Other, or the genitals. In *Totality and Infinity*, he writes that the face of the Other ‘destroys and overflows the plastic image it leaves me’ (Levinas, 2012b, p. 51), suggesting that the image cannot contain the face of the Other within its boundaries. Hagi Kenaan develops Levinas’s concept of the face resisting the look in his study of the gaze in Levinas’s work, writing that the face ‘is not something that I can frame with my camera or whose location I can point to because it is not located in any kind of “there”’ (2013, p. 34). For Kenaan, the face is ‘present as a kind of movement, the crossing of a border’ (2013, p. 34). The face cannot be confined in the camera, the image, or the gaze, and similarly nor can the genitals. In summarising this idea in Levinas’s work, Philippe Crignon asserts that:

The sexual organ is, at once, too much and too little for the eye. In its exhibition, it imposes on the gaze an excess of materiality that explodes all form, an ‘ultramateriality’ that is ‘exorbitant’, to use Levinas’s term. (2004, p. 104)

The sight or site of the genitals cannot be contained because of an excess of materiality. Ultramateriality, for Levinas, ‘designates the exhibitionist nudity of an exorbitant presence’ (2012b, p. 256). Ultramateriality is profane, a paroxysm of materiality. Again, here, we encounter a transgression of boundaries. The image or gaze is, for Levinas, also ruptured. The face and the genitals of the Other overflow the image’s boundaries. The images in the Josenkai museum question the boundaries between human and animal, between sex and death. The camera-eye, in creating the images in the museum does not attempt to ‘capture’ the gaze of the Other, the face, the genitals. Instead, through the *égalité du regard*, it establishes a communication between animal and human. The iris light represents a link between the eye of the camera and the animals, a gaze of sorts, making the perceiver aware of their self, as well as their awkwardness.

This communication between animal and human echoes Derrida’s discomfort at the gaze of the cat on his nakedness that makes him question who he is:

I often ask myself, just to see, *who I am* – and who I am (following) at the moment when, caught naked, in silence, by the gaze of an animal, for example the eyes of a cat, I have trouble, yes, a bad time overcoming my embarrassment. (2002, p. 372)

## *The Equality of the Gaze in Chris Marker's Films*

The gaze of the animal, falling upon a vulnerable human, performs the function of a mirror held up to the (human) self or subject. The dissymmetry that Levinas considers essential to the obligation of responsibility for the Other is intact, as is Marker's notion of the cat as deity, as the ascendant party in the interaction, the face-to-face encounter. The images from *Josenkai* reverse the Derridean interaction – it is the human who gazes at the animals' sex – but maintain the discomfort that stimulates the question of the self, if only because the animals have been linked directly with humans and the rift between feminine and masculine. These images open up a communication between human and animal. This communication occurs, perhaps, between the animal and the animal that resides in the human. Derrida talks of exactly this interaction, this transcendence:

Crossing borders or the ends of man I come or surrender to the animal – to the animal in itself, to the animal in me and the animal at unease with itself, to the man about which Nietzsche said [...] something to the effect that it was an as yet undetermined animal, an animal lacking in itself. (2002, p. 372)

There is a human animality that is accessed here in order to commune with the animal and crosses the border between the two. The similarities, not the differences, between human and animal are highlighted. The animal face leads to the human and the human face leads to the animal. In this way, the animal face obligates the human to it. Whether it differs from the human face or not, it cannot be ignored.

The *égalité du regard*, and the animal image formed from the meeting of gazes, becomes a means of communication, of obligating the human as subject. In his study of the animal in Bazin's film criticism, John Mullarkey writes that 'what might once have been in the background comes forward to share an intersubjective photographic space with another' (2012, p. 53). The animal passes from the depth of the image into a position of equality with the human subject. In this process, the boundaries between human and animal are corroded, transgressed, in the pursuit of equality between the species, an understanding that sex and death are not exclusive to humanity is accomplished. Inspired by the universe created by the cinematograph, Epstein writes in his major work, *The Intelligence of a Machine*:

Humanity is the only measure of the universe, yet this measure measures itself according to what it seeks to measure: it is relative among relative measures – an absolute variable. (2014, p. 74)

Epstein deconstructs human measurement and its understanding of the space in which humanity exists. Marker's camera, his camera-eye, through the *égalité du regard*, similarly problematises the boundaries between animal and human. This gestures toward an egalitarian cinema, crossing the borders between species, in which the gaze of the camera is reciprocated by an animal face.

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